

PRODUCT SPECIFICATION

HOUSE PLANTS GENERAL

March 2010

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The General Specifications for House Plants is effective as of 1 March 2010 and applies to all members of the Dutch Flower Auction Association (VBN).

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Introduction

The General Specifications for House Plants apply to all species, varieties and cultivars that are supplied as house plants or dry bulbs intended for direct use by the consumer and are supplied and traded at auctions belonging to the Dutch Flower Auction Association.

All products traded at the auctions are intended exclusively for decorative purposes and are not intended for internal consumption unless otherwise expressly mentioned on the product. Incorrect application, consumption, contact of and/or sensitivity to the products can lead to harmful consequences for humans and/or animals.

The general specifications have arisen in response to requirements regarding quality, grading, packing and descriptions. These requirements can only be diverged from if this is expressly agreed between the grower and buyer and if this agreement has been drawn up by the intermediary agency of a VBN auction.

For supplementary requirements per product, you are referred to the product specifications.

These are provided for each product as appendices to the general specifications. The requirements set out in the general specifications apply to all house plants unless otherwise mentioned in the product specifications.

Definitions

Climbing plant

Cultural form where the tendrils climb (attach themselves or are tied to support material).

Damage

Unintentional damage to plants parts that arise as a consequence of knocks, bruising, crushing, etc.

Deficiency symptoms

Divergent flower and/or leaf coloring as a result of too little feed.

Degradation

Damage to plants parts caused by animal and/or plant parasites.

Destroy

The products are unsuitable for trading, are rejected and then destroyed by the auction.

Do not trade

The product does not meet trading requirements and the grower is given the opportunity to improve the product so that trading can still take place.

Dry bulb

Flowering bulb that can be potted by the consumer and grown into a flowering state.

Dying off plant parts

Dead cells of root, stem, fruit, flower or leaf that affect the horticultural or practical value of the product.

Firm in the pot

Condition of the plant, where it stands in the pot in such a way that stability of the plant is guaranteed.

Flower bud/flower umbel

Formation of an inflorescence.

Flower stalk

The presence of more than one flower or flower bud on a stem or stalk.

Germinated

The appearance of newly formed, young roots.

Growth defects

Imperfections of plant parts that arise as a consequence of growth abnormalities during cultivation.

Hanging plant

Cultural form where the tendrils hang (over the edge of the pot).

Hardened

The plant must be able to exist in climatic conditions reasonably expected in the sales chain.

Leaflet

Separate leaf as part of a compound leaf.

Leaf tip

Plant cells at the tip of the leaf dying off which causes discoloration.

Minimum moisture content requirement

Moisture content of the potting compost / substratum considered necessary for the plant to endure the selling phase.

Parasites

All harmful animal and plant parasites, such as insects, moulds, bacteria, viruses, etc.

Plant bouquet

One plant which several (separate) plants are brought together in one pot.

Plant diameter

The diameter of the plant is determined by measuring the narrowest side of a free-standing (unsleeved) plant. The diameter of the smallest plant in the lot is used to determine the given diameter.

Plant height

The plant height is determined by measuring a free-standing (unsleeved) plant, from the highest point of the plant and including the pot. The height is rounded down to the nearest whole centimeter. The smallest plant in the lot is used to determine the given height. Support material is not measured. The exception to this is plants which use (moss) sticks and the crop is lower than the (moss) sticks. The length/height of the support material is the measured height of these plants. **Climbing plants** are measured from the underneath of the pot to the top of the support material. Tendrils that protrude above the support material are not measured.

Pot/plant ratio

A good pot/plant ratio is considered to be one that gives sufficient stability, has a sufficient food buffer and a good ornamental value.

Potted flower bulb

A bulb specifically grown to produce flowers and that has been placed in a pot and intended to be traded as a flowering house plant.

Product information

The correctly designated name of the product and the correct care advice for the consumer, per plant or per pot, should be stated on a stick-in or hanging label, a (printed) sleeve or a (printed) pot, unless otherwise stated in the product specifications.

Residue and/or contamination

Deposits on parts of the plant that disfigure the appearance of the plant.

Rooted

The presence of young, recently formed roots.

Root through

Condition of the root ball, where living roots are visible on the outside of the root ball.

Rooted through

Condition of the root ball, where the roots have grown through the pot and are (have been) rooted in the ground.

Runners

A stem that grows from the heart of the plant and along the ground, on which new plants can grow.

Signs of dying off

The release of pollen from the flower and/or the wilting of flower parts.

Stakes/rings/canes

The supports of the plant which prevent breakage and help the plant keep its shape.

Staked

A well-staked plant is supported in such a way that its shape retains at least 90% of the plant's height.

Tendril length

The length of the tendril is determined by measuring a free-standing (unsleeved) plant, where the length of the longest tendril is measured from the growth tip to the heart of the plant.

Visually free of animal and/or plant parasites

The whole plant, as far as the naked eye can tell, has no animal and/or plant parasites.

Well protected

The plant's protection ensures the plant is not damaged during transport.

Stem with single umbel

Non-bifurcated plants with an inflorescence.

I. Minimum requirements to permit trading

All products traded through the VBN auctions should meet the minimum requirements set out below. If the plants do not meet these requirements, they will not be traded and, where necessary, destroyed.

1. MINIMUM QUALITY (plants in pots)

- The pot must be at least 90% filled with potting compost/substratum.
- Potting compost/substratum should not be hanging over the pot to any great degree.
- The root ball must meet minimum moisture content requirements.
- De pot must be clean.
- The root ball must be root through.
- House plants intended as **hanging plants** should be supplied in a hanging pot with a dish and/or water reservoir and hanging options.
- **Potted flower bulbs** should have undergone treatment that guarantees good flowering.
- **Flower bulbs** must be firm in the pot.
(Plants that do not meet this requirement will not be traded)
- The plant must show signs of growth.
- The plant must meet the minimum B1 quality requirements.
(Plants that do not meet this requirement will not be traded)

2. MATURITY (for flowering plants only)

- Minimum maturity requires a well-developed inflorescence. This is photo stage 1 of the maturity stage photos per product group.
- Maximum maturity requires flowers to show no signs of ageing or dying off.
(Plants that do not meet this requirement will not be destroyed)

3. LEGAL PROVISIONS

- In order to trade, supplied products should meet the legal requirements, including regulations have been drawn up by the Phytosanitary Department and/or the Netherlands Inspection Service for Horticulture or a similarly legally recognized institution in respect of the EG Phytosanitary guidelines.
- Growers supplying products required to have a plant passport must, as a minimum legal requirement, provide each plant or packaging unit with a plant passport. The grower should be registered with the Netherlands Inspection Service for Horticulture or the Phytosanitary Department or a similarly legally recognized institute.
(Plants that do not meet this requirement will not be traded)

II. Quality and grading requirements

1.1 Quality and grading requirements

Lots supplied to the auction are subject to the following requirements:

- The lot should be of good internal quality.
- The lot should be fresh.
- The lot should be hardened.
- The lot should be free of animal and/or plant parasites (visually free).
- The lot should be free of degradation and/or damage by animal and/or plant parasites.
- The lot should be free of damage and/or defects and/or divergence and/or contamination in:
 - flower/umbel/bud
 - root/root system
 - stalk/stem
 - leaf/needle/thorn
- The lot should have a good shape, structure, and flower and leaf color.
- The plants must be strong and straight in the pot.
- The plants must have a good pot /plant ratio.
- The plants must be well rooted.
- Repotted or transplanted plants should have undamaged root balls. The new pots of transplanted plants should be at least as big as the original pot so that the root ball is not damaged.
- **Climbing plants** should be well staked/supported, especially the tips of tendrils. The tendrils may not have grown more than 25% above the (height of) support material, on condition that the tendrils are climbing strongly.
- **Climbing plants** should be growing evenly around the support material.
- **Climbing plants** should have grown up at least 90% of the height of the support material.
- The lot should have a uniform color and volume.
- The lot should be uniformly and correctly graded, including
 - pot
 - plant height
 - plant diameter
 - density
 - maturity
- The lot should be correctly and uniformly packed.

1.2 Requirements and quality remarks

When a lot diverges from one or more of the stated requirements, the lot in question can be auctioned with a quality remark (and associated quality code). The seriousness of the deviation determines if the lot is traded without a quality remark, a minor quality remark or a major quality remark. A quality remark is awarded on the basis of the following overview:

Overview 1: quality remarks by divergence from the abovementioned requirements

divergence	minor divergence	major divergence
number plants in lot		
less than 5%*	no quality remark	minor quality remark
5% and more**	minor quality remark	major quality remark

*) The requirement regarding the presence of animal and/or plant parasites is '0%' instead of 'less than 5%'.

***) The requirement regarding the presence of animal and/or plant parasites is '1% or more' instead of '5% or more'.

1.3 Additional grading requirements per lot

Depending on the product, the following additional requirements for grading house plants on pot/root ball, plant height, plant diameter, maturity, density or other features apply. The requirements state the applicable tolerances such as those given in the overview in section 1.2. A minor divergence occurs if the grading differs by one category (class). A major divergence occurs if the grading difference by two or more categories (classes).

1.3.1 Grading on pot

- The pots in the lot must be undamaged, and uniform in size, color and material.
- The pot size can be stated in the grading remarks under quality code S01, in conformance with Overview 2.

Overview 2: grading on pot size

pot size	quality code S01
set	001
root ball	002
4 cm	004
5 cm	005
5.5 cm	505
6 cm	006
6.5 cm	506
7 cm	007
7.5 cm	507
8 cm	008
8.5 cm	508
9 cm	009
9.5 cm	509
10 cm	010
10.5 cm	510
11 cm	011
11.5 cm	511
12 cm	012
12.5 cm	512
13 cm	013
14 cm	014
15 cm	015
..	..
etc. in gradations of 1	
..	..
61 cm	061
62 cm	062
65 cm	065
70 cm	070
75 cm	075
78 cm	078
80 cm	080
83 cm	083
85 cm	085
90 cm	090
91 cm	091
100 cm	100
110 cm	110
120 cm	120
135 cm	135
140 cm	140
remaining	999

1.3.2 Grading on plant height

- Grading is in categories: from 5 to 30 cm in gradations of 2.5 cm; from 30 to 200 cm in gradations of 5 cm, and from 200 cm in gradations of 10 cm.
- Height grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under quality code S02, in conformance with Overview 3. The height of the shortest plant in the lot, rounded down, is given.

Overview 3: grading on plant height

plant height (cm)	quality code S02
5 - 7.5	005
7.5 - 10	007
10 - 12.5	010
12.5 - 15	012
15 - 17.5	015
17.5 - 20	017
20 - 22.5	020
22.5 - 25	022
25 - 27.5	025
27.5 - 30	027
30 - 35	030
35 - 40	035
etc. in gradations of 5	
190 - 195	190
195 - 200	195
200 - 210	200
etc. in gradations of 10	

1.3.3 Grading on plant diameter

- Grading in categories: from 5 to 30 cm in gradations of 2,5 cm; from 30 to 50 cm in gradations of 5 cm; from 50 in gradations of 10 cm.
- Diameter grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under quality code S04, in conformance with Overview 4. The plant diameter of the narrowest plant in the lot, rounded down, is given.

Overview 4: grading on plant diameter

plant diameter (cm)	quality code S04
7.5 - 10	007
10 - 12.5	010
12.5 - 15	012
15 - 17.5	015
17.5 - 20	017
20 - 22.5	020
22.5 - 25	022
25 - 27.5	025
27.5 - 30	027
30 - 35	030
35 - 40	035
40 - 45	040
45 - 50	045
50 - 60	050
60 - 70	060
70 - 80	070
etc. in gradations of 10	

1.3.3 Grading on tendril length

- Grading in categories: from 5 to 30 cm in gradations of 2,5 cm; from 30 to 50 cm in gradations of 5 cm; from 50 in gradations of 10 cm.
- Tendril length grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under quality code S32, in conformance with Overview 5.

Overview 5: grading on tendril length

tendril length (cm)	quality code S32
5 - 7.5	005
7.5 - 10	007
10 - 12.5	010
12.5 - 15	012
15 - 17.5	015
17.5 - 20	017
20 - 22.5	020
22.5 - 25	022
25 - 27.5	025
27.5 - 30	027
30 - 35	030
35 - 40	035
40 - 45	040
45 - 50	045
50 - 60	050
etc. in gradations of 10	

1.3.5 Grading on maturity

- Graded in categories where two successive maturity stages in a category may occur (in conformance with the maturity stage photos).
- Maturity grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under quality code S05. The lowest (youngest) maturity stage is reported under the grading code.

1.3.6 Grading on density

- Graded in four categories in conformance with the density grading photos.
- Density grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under quality code S08.

1.3.7 Grading on other features

- Graded in categories on the number of flowers, buds, flower stalks, shoots/plants per pot, stems, etc., depending on the product.
- Grading can be reported during trading using the grading remarks under one of the applicable quality codes.

1.4 Grading codes

Information on the grading is given in the grading codes by means of quality remarks / quality codes. Reporting quality remarks/ quality codes is either required or advised, depending on the product. The Overview Grading Codes for House Plants (attached to and a part of these specifications) indicate by product which quality remarks / quality codes are required and/or advised and in which order the grading codes should be given. A maximum of 20 quality remarks / quality codes can be indicated in the grading codes. When trading via the clock only the first four quality remarks (or codes) are stated.

1.5 Requirements for mixed lots

- The lot may be designated ‘mixed’ if at least three clearly distinguishable species /cultivars or colors/tints per packaged unit are present. One variety or color can form no more than 50% of the number of plants in the lot. The mix ratio between reciprocal packaging units and/or trolleys in each lot should be uniform.
- However, the lot may be designated ‘mixed trolley’ if each packaged unit has one cultivar/color and where each trolley has several packaged units each with a different cultivar/color, resulting in a trolley that can be put together in mixed layers or trays. In such cases, the minimum selling quantity is 1 trolley.
- The tolerances given in the overview in section 1.2 apply.

2. QUALITY GROUPS BASED ON QUALITY CODES

House plants can be traded in three quality groups (A1, A2 and B1) depending on the extent to which they meet the quality and grading requirements (see chapter 1).

2.1 Quality codes

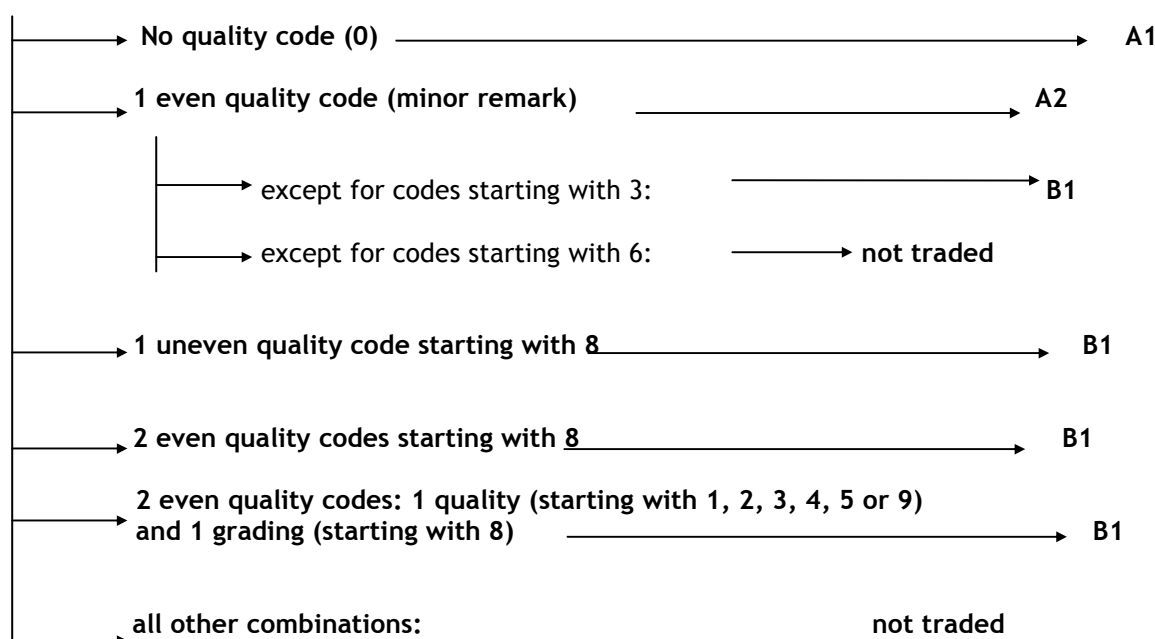
The extent to which the lot does not meet the quality and grading requirements is expressed by negative quality remarks applied to the lot. The quality remarks are translated in the corresponding negative quality codes (quality codes K01 and K02), in conformance with the following principle:

quality remarks	negative quality code (K01/K02)
no	0.00
minor quality remarks	even quality code
major quality remarks	uneven quality code

2.2 Classification of quality groups

The quality codes determine in which quality group the lot is to be traded, in accordance with the following framework:

QUALITY CODE



III. Packing regulations

1. GENERAL

- Packaging must be selected so that house plants are well protected during transport and the selling process in the rest of the chain.
- House plants are required to be supplied in packaging recognized by the VBN.
- Once-only packaging may not be re-used.
- Products that have thorns, needles, rigid branches and/or sharp leaf ends as well as products with (special) support material should be packed in such a way as to prevent any form of injury and/or damage to people and/or environment during the selling process.
- If images of the **bulb product** occur on sleeves and/or other packing and/or stick-in/hanging labels, these images should correspond with the packed product.
- **Potted flower bulbs** in pot size 8 cm or larger must be provided with product information.

2. LOADING

- Each layer of a trolley should, depending on the pot size, be loaded with the minimum number of plants as detailed below:

pot size (in cm)	number per layer auction trolley	number per layer Danish container
17	49	30
19	30	21
21	25	18
24	20	15
27	12	-

The trolley should, depending on the plant height, be loaded with the minimum number of plants as detailed below:

plant height (in cm)	number layers
to 30	5
30 - 40	4
40 - 60	3
60 - 100	2
100 and taller	1

- The free space in the trolley between the product and the tray above should be at least 5 cm.
- Divergence from the loading requirements is only permitted if loading in conformance with the requirements would reasonably lead to damage of the product and then only if the responsible auctioneer gives permission beforehand.

3. SANCTIONS

If the packing requirements are not met, the product will not be traded. The packing requirements may be deviated from only if traded via an intermediary agency and it has been agreed beforehand between the grower and the buyer.

IV. Description regulations

Every trolley should be provided with a fully and correctly completed delivery form, which states as a minimum the following details of the grower:

- Grower's details: company, address, grower's number
- Auction or trading date
- Number of packaged units
- Number of items per packaged units / container
- VBN packing code
- VBN product code: the selected code should describe the product as accurately as possible
- Grading code
- Corresponding product description
- Type trolley: auction (stacking) trolley or Danish container (if applicable)
- Auction or product group (if applicable)
- Positive quality remarks (if applicable)
- Trading method

Genetically modified products should be identified with the correct citation in the product information.

V. Advice

- It is advisable to provide the product with product information.
- It is advisable to provide plants in pot sizes 9 cm and larger with the information text "this product is intended exclusively for decorative purposes and is not intended for internal consumption. Incorrect application, consumption, contact of and/or sensitivity to the product can lead to harmful consequences for humans and/or animals". The text may be given on the pot, sleeve or on a label (stick-in/hanging label). If there is lack of space on the stick-in or hanging label, the following text can be used: "Intended for decoration and not for consumption".
- If a sleeve is used, it is strongly recommended to use a sleeve that is closed/sealed underneath.
- If no VBN product code is available, it is advisable to enter the cultivar with the lot and to have it registered as quickly as possible to obtain a product code.
- It is advisable to have new cultivars not on the advice list tested for suitability for use as a **potted flower bulb**.